

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on "The American Energy Initiative: A Focus on the Future
of Energy Technology with an Emphasis on Canadian Oil Sands"
March 20, 2012

This is the 17th day of our hearing on the American Energy Initiative.

President Obama has given many energy speeches in recent weeks, and every time he laments that America has only two percent of the world's proven oil reserves - as if there's nothing we can do about it.

Well today we are going to discuss how Canada took action to increase its proven reserves several-fold by allowing the development of oil sands in Alberta.

Energy naysayers would have never imagined a new source of North American oil so big that it would require increased pipeline capacity to handle it.

But that is exactly what has happened with Alberta's oil sands, and we will continue to fight for the Keystone XL pipeline expansion project that would bring an additional 700,000 barrels per day of this oil to Midwestern and Gulf Coast refineries. The benefits in terms of additional secure oil and thousands of jobs are just too valuable to throw away.

There is no question that I would like to see more Canadian oil flowing into our country. But there's something else I would also like to see coming here - a pro-energy agenda that made oil sands production possible. There is plenty of untapped oil here in the U.S. - but all-too-much of it is bottled up by federal access restrictions and regulatory red tape. This needs to change, and the development of Canada's oil sands provides many lessons as to how to go about it.

In spite of regulatory obstacles to additional development and production here in the United States, we do see some signs of the can-do spirit in the American oil industry.

For example, new drilling techniques pioneered in the U.S. have turned North Dakota into a major oil producing state.

But that was possible only because the land there is not controlled by the federal government. In the vast onshore and offshore areas where the Obama administration must give the go-ahead before exploration and production can commence, the answer is usually no.

I'm sure the Canadian people care about the environment every bit as much as Americans do, and they have insisted that oil sands production be done safely.

We will learn today about the successful efforts to decrease the environmental impacts from oil sands even as production increases through technology.

The difference is that Canadian regulators seek to make energy production safe, while the Obama Administration's regulators often seek to make it impossible.

That is why Canada's oil sands is nearly as valuable as an example of energy policy done right as it is for the oil itself. America can and must increase its domestic energy production, and there is much to learn from the Canadian experience as to how we can get there.

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